

# Special commemorative edition of the 1913 Lockout Socialist Worker

100 years after the Dublin Lockout...

## We Still Need Fighting Unions

ONE hundred years ago a titanic battle took place on the streets of Dublin when workers fought for the right to join a union.

Their principle enemy was William Martin Murphy, the owner of the Independent Group of newspapers and the Dublin Tram Company.

Murphy defeated the workers who were forced to tear up their union cards.

But in the longer term, the memory of that battle lingered and mass unionisation developed during the War of Independence. Irish workers won their rights because they fought through strikes and occupations.

Now, however, the ghost of William Martin Murphy is appearing again amongst the class of employers.

### Ryan air

Michael O' Leary, the boss of Ryanair, looks like a direct relative. He will not have any trade unionist in his airline and will sack anyone who tries to bring one in.

A survey amongst his pilots showed that 94 percent wanted the regulator to conduct an inquiry into the impact of employment practices on safety.

But when one of those pilots, Captain John Goss, appeared on Channel 4 to voice these concerns he was immediately sacked.

By pure coincidence, Ryanair, took disciplinary procedures against him in 2005 claiming that he was trying to intimidate other staff.

His real 'crime' was that he encouraged them to join the pilots union.

For over a decade O' Leary has fought a war against trade unionists, even taking a Supreme Court case to prevent unions making claims against his company to the Labour Court.

But while O' Leary uses his fist to break trade unions, other employers sweet talk union leaders into being 'partners'.

### IBEC

IBEC, the employers federation are masters at this. They meet union



leaders and state officials regularly to plan an 'orderly' system of industrial relations.

But at the start of the economic crisis, they immediately embarked on a strategy of wage cuts.

Their aim is to turn Ireland into a low wage economy where pay is reduced and overtime rates are cut.

Their 'ideal model worker' is one who is totally flexible - willing to answer every need of their boss.

Over the past few years, Irish workers have experienced more wage cuts than most other EU workers bar those in the Baltic States and Romania.

The state itself has turned wage cutting into an official policy - slashing wages by 17 percent in the public sector.

### Union complicity

One of the reasons they get away with all this is that the current union leaders of SIPTU, IMPACT and the ICTU do not want to fight in any serious way.

They suggest that 'muscle' was needed in the era before 1913 - but the union leaders of today use their 'brains'.



One hundred years on the ghost of Martin Murphy is alive and well

However, cowardice is not a particular sign of 'brains'. Their failure to put up even a minimal defence of wages and conditions shows that they are not fit to lead Irish workers.

They are a disgrace when compared to their forerunners who fought in 1913. The contrast between Jack O'Connor to Jim Larkin is like the one between a pigny and a giant.

Irish workers need to recover the spirit of struggle summed up in the word Larkinism. We need a return to solidarity and fighting



unions. To do that, we need to remove those leaders who are too frightened to fight.

We need to break all links to the Labour Party and remove the influence it has exerted on our unions. We need to get behind the Dublin Bus workers who have shown a willing to resist.

In this edition we will examine the events from 100 years ago, drawing the lessons for militants today. Given the current crisis fighting trade unions are surely more important than ever.



### In their own words

One hundred years after the Dublin Lock Out, Socialist Workers asked visitors to Henrietta's St's tour of 'Dublin Tenement Experience, Living The Lockout', what they remember about the momentous events

Tracy Bardon said "I feel proud they did stand up, it's just a shame people were hurt and were starving. The credit should be given to those people for the health & safety laws and unions we have today."

Lorraine Scanlon said "We definitely wouldn't be where we are today if the events of 1913 in relation to workers rights didn't happen. It also brings home how history is repeating itself with all of the austerity."

Ross Gaynor said "I don't believe People in Dublin are as aware of 1913 history as we should be. I studied history in college and never learnt history like this. I think the history is important. All that's going on today, we should be doing more things on Dublin history from a workers perspective."

Monica and Willie a couple who visited together said they were brought to tears from the visit. Willie said "people today wouldn't know too much about 1913, especially the younger generation."

"They were right back in 1913 to stand up, but I don't think people today are confident enough to fight."

"The unions have been sold out with politicians, money and power. SIPTU which used to be the Transport union are doing business on their belief on Larkin, but they are not carrying Larkinism out."

"Nowadays people are not organised enough. You need someone with a bit of bite like Larkin and Connolly, and to get a revolution."

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Kieran Allen analyses 'The Fiery Cross of Larkinism'

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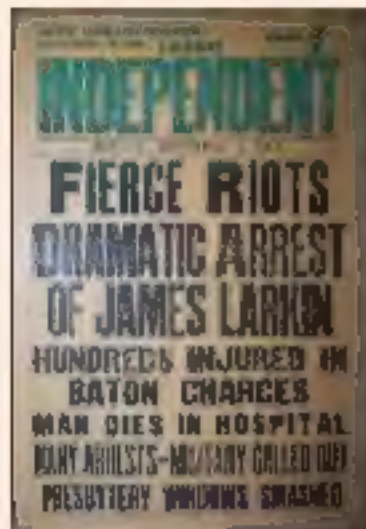
Alan Lawes PRO of SIPTU Grassroots on militant trade unionism today



# The 1913 Lockout

## Time Line of the Key Events

**26 August 1913.** The strike began. Tram workers strike.  
**28 August.** Larkin and other labour leaders were arrested on charges of seditious speaking. They were released later that day.  
**29 August.** Official proclamation issued prohibiting the proposed meeting in O'Connell St. on 31 August.  
**30 August.** Police issued a warrant for Larkin's arrest for using seditious language inciting people to riot and to pillage shops. Riots in Ringsend, Beresford Place, and Eden Quay.  
**31 August.** Bloody Sunday: Larkin arrested for speaking at banned meeting. Hundreds injured during riots throughout the city that night.  
**1 September.** Jacobs shut down part of its factory because of a strike by members of the ITGWU.



**2 September.** The Dublin Coal Merchants' Association locked out members of the ITGWU. Two tenement houses collapsed in Church Street, causing the death of seven persons and serious injury to others.  
**3 September.** The employers drew up an agreement that pledged not to employ members of the ITGWU, and to sack those who refused to accept this decision.  
**4 September.** A labourer named John Byrne died from injuries received during rioting on Saturday night, 30 August.

**5 September.** A conference was held between employers, workers, and English trade unionists to try to resolve the dispute, without success.

**7 September.** The jury at the inquest into the death of John Byrne ruled that the cause of death was a fracture of the skull although they could not determine how the injury was caused.

**9 September.** The Dublin Building Trades Employers' Federation adopted unanimously a resolution not to employ members of the ITGWU, and dismissed workers who did not accept this decision.

**12 September.** Farmers in Co. Dublin gave notice to labourers who belonged to the ITGWU. Members of the Dublin Carriers' Association fired workers who refused to handle 'tainted' goods, i.e., materials provided by or for employers who supported Murphy's lockout.

**15 September.** Another conference took place between employers, workers, and English trade unionists, but ended in failure.

**16 September.** Serious rioting broke out in Finglas village, and the police opened fire to disperse rioters.

**21 September.** Strikers marched through the city centre and clashed with police.

**22 September.** Staff employed by Timber Merchants refused to work with 'tainted' goods, and joined the strike.

**25 September.** Troops were drafted in to protect property, and to deliver coal to Government bodies that were not involved in the dispute.

**26 September.** The Government Board of Trade appointed George Askwith, Thomas R. Rathliffe-Ellis, and J. R. Clynes MP to oversee a Court of Inquiry to investigate the causes of the dispute, and to try to end it.

**27 September.** The first food ship arrives from England with 60,000 'family boxes' for striking workers.

**29 September.** The Askwith Commission of Inquiry into the causes of the Lockout began.

**6 October.** The Court of Inquiry concluded. Askwith recommended that a Conciliation Committee be set up to hear the case of workers and employers, and to attempt to resolve disputes before a strike or lockout was declared. Employers rejected Askwith's proposals.

**8 October.** Serious riots occurred in Swords, Co. Dublin when striking workers tried to prevent farmers bringing cattle to market. Police and civilians were injured.

**14 October.** In response to the Commissioners' Report, the Employers' Federation announced that they would end the Lockout only if the ITGWU were completely reorganised, under new leadership, and that they would not promise to reinstate every worker because they would not fire workers who replaced those on strike.

**16 October.** A crowd of about 4000 striking workers marched through the city to protest at the employers' statement.

**20 October.** Archbishop William Walsh condemned the plan to send children of strikers to England for the duration of the strike.

**21 October.** The first group of children set sail for England, amidst loud protests from angry crowds at the ports.

**12 November.** Labourers in Dublin port stopped work.

**9 December.** TUC conference in England opposes any attempt to spread solidarity action to Britain.

**18 December.** Representatives of workers and employers met again to try to reach agreement but discussions ended two days later because of disagreement about the reinstatement of workers who had been on strike.

**December 1913 & January 1914.** Striking workers gradually began to return to work and the Lockout ended by degrees.

**May 1914.** Last of the locked out workers at Jacobs return to work.



By Paul O'Brien

**T**he Dublin Lock Out in 1913 was the high point of the 'Great Unrest' of 1910-1914, which was one of the longest and most sustained rebellions in British and Irish working class history.

The strike wave, which began in 1910, was a powerful demonstration of class solidarity and a warning of what was to come if Jim Larkin had his way.

During the period of the 'Great Unrest' it became clear to the employers that they would have to break Larkin or he would break them.

They recognised that this was class war and in William Martin Murphy the employers had found their Napoleon.

Murphy owned the Dublin United Tramway Company, Clery's department store, the Imperial Hotel in O'Connell Street, and the *Independent* newspaper group.

On 15 August 1913 Murphy entered the dispatch department of the *Irish Independent* and informed the workers that they must choose between Larkin and their jobs. Some forty employees refused to resign from the union and they were immediately sacked. The next day the van men in Eason's, the newspaper distributor, refused to handle any of the *Independent* newspapers and they were locked out. Two days later on 17 August Murphy sacked two hundred tram workers who refused to resign from the ITGWU.

### Bloody Sunday

Larkin and the tram workers had no choice, and on Thursday 26 August at 10am the tram drivers and conductors switched off the motors and left the trams where they stood.

But Murphy moved quickly and his reserve army of blacklegs managed to keep a skeleton service in operation.

Larkin announced that he would address a mass meeting in O'Connell Street the following Sunday and urged all members and their families to attend.

The meeting was banned, but Larkin was determined that the meeting would go ahead.

Disguised as an elderly gentleman Larkin booked into the Imperial Hotel opposite the GPO in O'Connell Street, and stepped out on to the balcony to address the crowd.

He was immediately arrested and in the riots that followed, the police broke into the tenement houses, ransacking homes, and assaulting the residents.

Hundreds were arrested and injured on a day that is remembered as 'Bloody Sunday'.

Murphy and the employers were unmoved by the events on Bloody Sunday.

They believed they had Larkin on the run. The next day Jacobs's biscuit factory locked out all of their workers and the coal merchants followed suit. On 3 September Murphy upped the stakes.

The employers began a war of extermination against the unions, and against Larkin. By the middle of September 25,000 workers were locked out, affecting almost the entire working class population of Dublin.

The British Trade Union Congress (TUC), which was meeting in Manchester that week were horrified by reports of the events in Dublin and agreed to send a delegation to Dublin to investigate the situation and report back.

But a meeting between the British TUC delegates and the employers' representatives in the Shelbourne Hotel came to nothing. The employers refused to recognise the ITGWU under any circumstances.

### The Fiery Cross Campaign

The day after 'Bloody Sunday' Larkin went to Manchester to address the reconvened conference of the British TUC, and report on the situation in Dublin.

The TUC voted to immediately allocate £5,000 to the Dublin strike and organise a weekly subvention to support their comrades in Dublin.

However, the suggestion by the suffragist Dora Montefiore, that the children of the Dublin strikers should be billeted with trade union families in Britain to ensure they were fed and cared for lost a significant section of Catholic middle-class support for the strike.

While Larkin was in England, Connolly had called out the dock workers in Dublin, upping the stakes, declaring that Dublin was now closed 'tight as a drum'. With no end in sight it became a war of attrition, and given their resources this was a war the employers were bound to win.

What could break the deadlock in favour of the workers was sympathetic action in Britain; a declaration that British workers

would refuse to handle any goods sent by rail and sea to or from Ireland.

Larkin and Connolly demanded action, not charity, from the British TUC.

Thousands of rank and file rail workers, dockers and carters across Britain were already taking action in support of their brothers and sisters in Dublin.

Larkin launched his 'Fiery Cross' campaign speaking at a series of rallies in England. At the opening rally in Manchester 4,000 people were packed into the hall and 20,000 more were outside.

For the meeting in the Albert Hall in London 40,000 applied for tickets to hear Jim Larkin, James Connolly, Bernard Shaw and George Russell, call for solidarity. But the TUC bureaucracy had no intention of spreading the dispute to Britain—or losing control of the situation.

A special conference of the TUC was held on 9 December 1913. The 600 delegates were handpicked and all of them were full time officials.

A motion to blockade Dublin and block all goods from there was put to the delegates, but it was overwhelmingly rejected by the union leaders.

Instead, a few sophs were thrown to Dublin in the form of motions condemning the employers and asking for financial support for the Dublin workers.

### Betrayal

This betrayal was a devastating blow that effectively ended any hopes of victory, and was the beginning of the end of the lockout.

On 19 January the ITGWU advised its members to return to work on any terms they could get.

By this stage financial support from Britain had slowed to a fraction of what it was, and the last food ship had been dispatched.

Dublin was on its own. The lockout dragged on for another few months, as employers dictated the terms and conditions for a return to work.

The last to return in May 1914 were the 300 women locked out by Jacobs Biscuit factory. They agreed to re-employ girls of good character, if and when vacancies occurred. 'Good character' of course was a euphemism for not being a militant or an agitator during the strike.



## Analysis

# The fiery cross of Larkinism

By Kieran Allen

**T**he most militant traditions of Irish workers are expressed in one word: Larkinism.

The mood of defiance and class solidarity associated with the name of James Larkin arose in the years before 1913.

It then exploded again during the War of Independence when workers staged general strikes and occupations.

It has left an abiding memory that lasts to this day. Even when the Gardai were fighting threatened pay cuts last year, they organised protests under the banner: 1913-Lockout-2013-Sell out.

Jim Larkin was a revolutionary socialist, whose declared mission was the destruction of capitalism.

Born of Irish parents, he first shot to fame in Liverpool in 1905 when he tried to establish a closed shop – a union only workplace.

As a popular working class speaker and agitator, he had no rival. He was appointed a union organiser for the National Union of Dock Labourers by an ex-Fenian, James Sexton.

His first organising mission was in Belfast in 1907, where he pulled together one of the most magnificent examples of working class solidarity.

A mass meeting of over 10,000 Catholic and Protestant workers was held in solidarity with a dockers' and carters' strike. Even the police mutinied, with many joining the strike.

Tragically, however, the strike was sold out by Sexton who had become a typical union bureaucrat.

## The ITGWU

The lesson was not lost on Larkin and in 1909 he set up a new union, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union.

This union was to be built on a totally new philosophy and it was never about just one man, as Larkin himself argued:

'Don't bother about cheering Larkin – he is but one of yourselves. It is you that want the cheers and it is you that deserve them.'

'It is you and the class you come from – the downtrodden class – that should get the cheers. I don't recognise myself – a mean soul like myself in a mean body – as being the movement'.

Larkinism was, in fact, the Irish version of revolutionary syndicalism – a movement that swept the US, France, Britain and other countries and was indirectly inspired by the 1905 Russian Revolution.

Instead of waiting for parliamentary representatives to deliver socialism to the working class from above, it argued that workers should win socialism through their own actions.

This anti-capitalist message guided the tactics of the ITGWU. James Connolly put the matter succinctly when he stated that the union believed that 'No consideration of any contract with a section of the capitalist class absolved any of us from taking instant action to protect other



Larkin, in disguise, arrested in 1913

sections when (they) were in danger from the capitalist enemy'.

In other words, the union was not a professional industrial relations service that sought compromises and friendly relations with employers – its strategy was based on the reality of class war.

The union saw agreements with employers as temporary arrangements that could be broken if there was a need for solidarity. From this outlook sprung the doctrine of the sympathetic strike.

Arnold Wright was one of the main propagandists for the Dublin employers. But he was accurate when he recognised that Larkinism was not about 'an ordinary English type of union'.

It was, he argued, 'a revolutionary rising', intent on 'the destruction of Society

quite as much as the betterment of the wage conditions of the workers'.

## The Irish Worker

In 1911, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union launched its own weekly paper the *Irish Worker*, edited by Larkin. It had an average circulation of 20,000 a week, rising sometimes to 70,000.

The historian Desmond Greaves claimed that 'it was read or discussed by the entire working class of the city'.

It was a magnificent example of working class journalism. It turned the world upside down and made the rich and powerful the object of working class contempt.

It called employers like William Martin Murphy, for example, 'the most foul and vicious blackguard that ever polluted the

country'.

Its mocking, sneering tone was designed to raise workers from a mood of subordination and defeat to one of pride in their own class and confidence to take on their enemy.

'The Irish working class are begging to awaken' it proclaimed. 'They are coming to realise the truth of the saying "He who would be free, himself must strike the blow".'

It has sometimes been argued that syndicalism avoided politics – but this was by no means that case, with the *Irish Worker*.

It set out to boldly decolonise the Irish mindset and became the strongest organ of militant anti-imperialism. It openly promoted the republican ideals of Fintan Lawlor and Wolfe Tone.

It took up arguments with the Catholic Church when it attacked socialist politics but still suggested that, 'There is no antagonism between the cross and socialism.'

'A man can pray to Jesus the Carpenter and be a better socialist for it. Rightly understood, there is no conflict between the vision of Marx and the vision of Christ'.

## One Big Union

Larkin's strategy was to build 'One Big Union' that would eventually be organised in every workplace.

Once that had been achieved, the working class would declare a general strike. This would constitute the final 'lock-out' of the employers and workers would then take over society.

The strategy, unfortunately, had two weaknesses. It assumed that workers could build up their economic strength under capitalism – much like capitalists had built theirs under feudalism.

However, as 1913 showed, defeats can be imposed by employers and so the One Big Union could never accumulate more economic strength than the capitalists.

Second, Larkinism advocated revolutionary socialism but neither Larkin nor Connolly focused on building a revolutionary party.

They tended to see political developments as only 'an echo' of the industrial battle and played down the need for a party that had a coherent view of the world.

At the height of the 1913 battle, they made no effort to recruit workers to a socialist party.

While the struggle was going up, this did not seem to matter much. But defeats breed political confusion and by the time the workers' movement began to revive after 1918, that confusion was rife.

Many workers were looking to Sinn Féin and even Connolly's own daughter, Nora, was talking as if Arthur Griffin was 'a God-given saint' – even though he had opposed workers in 1913.

## The Russian Revolution

Larkin recognised some of these problems when he became an enthusiastic supporter of the Russian Revolution. In August 1919, he helped to found the Communist Labour Party in America.

But he was caught up in a vicious crackdown against the American left and sentenced to five years in Sing Sing prison for 'criminal anarchy'.

He was released in 1923 and returned to Ireland as a convinced supporter of the Bolshevik revolution. The following year, for example, he led 6,000 mourners through the streets of Dublin after Lenin's death.

Larkin was never successful in building a revolutionary socialist party and later he retreated from this position to eventually join the Labour Party.

But during the commemoration of the 1913 lockout, there is a need to uncover its hidden history to discover how revolutionary socialism – in its Larkinite form – won the allegiance of so many Irish workers and left us a vital marker for the future.

## In focus

# Giants of the Irish Labour Movement - Larkin and Connolly in 1913

By Maeve Mc Grath

**B**oth James Larkin and James Connolly played integral roles in the events of 1913.

Although Connolly later became associated with the 1916 Rising, his politics and activism were constantly entwined with those of Larkin.

From the founding of the ITGWU, to their roles as socialist revolutionaries both men struggled tirelessly for working class self-emancipation.

Neither of them was interested in reformism and when the lockout began, William Martin

Murphy understood that he had to break them.

## Arrested

From the outset both men were viciously targeted. With the help of the Royal Irish Constabulary Larkin was arrested on 28 August on the charge of libel and conspiracy.

Out on bail, he called a meeting for 31 August only to be rearrested. Connolly was also lifted for the crime of asking workers to attend the meeting in solidarity.

Realising that support from British workers would be crucial, Larkin set out on his release to



Larkin and Connolly

build solidarity across England.

At his first appearance in Manchester as many as 24,000 people turned up to hear the fire-brand argue for sympathetic strikes and the blackening of goods coming out of Dublin.

## TUC sell out

In the end the radical edge of Larkinism was actually blunted by the British Trade Union leaders. Fearing the consequences of rank and file militancy they decided to move against the ITGWU. Tragically this mirrors the thinking that now dominates the Irish Congress of Trade

Unions.

ICTU leaders will surely make a song and dance about their being the heirs of Larkin and Connolly. In reality they are the heirs of the traitors in the British TUC.

In the hundred years since the Lock-Out took place, the bureaucrats have merely succeeded in cementing their roles at the top of the union movement.

But if Larkin and Connolly were here today, they would surely denounce the likes of Begg and O'Connor, whilst fighting for the types of unions that can actually help workers to take on their employers.



# Building Fighting Tr

How do we build fighting trade unions today – in the workplaces and on the streets

By Marnie Holburn

## Organised workers are the key

Every struggle and campaign against austerity is important as it asserts the right of putting people before the banks.

But the place where real change can be brought about is in the thousands of workplaces – the civil service offices, the schools and colleges, the hospitals, the multinational plants, the banks, the bus garages, the train stations, the factories, food processing plants – which keep the system going.

'Where the chains of capitalism are forged there they must be broken' wrote Rosa Luxemburg, a German revolutionary writing around the same time as the Dublin lock-out.

That is why trade unions are not just another campaign, but a key arena of struggle which brings to bear the collective power of workers, as the Dublin bus strike showed recently.

Of course, when we look at the pathetic trade union standard-bearers that we have today, it is hard for us to believe that SIPTU or IMPACT could ever challenge the powers that be.

But history shows that when society moves, from Dublin 1913 to Cairo, Barcelona or Istanbul 2013, the strength of the workers' movement can determine the outcome.

We need to find ways of using union membership to create networks across workers, within workplaces and across them.

This means building political trade unionism which seeks to link the immediate battle in defence of conditions to the broader fight against austerity.

Most of the trade union battles today start with workers fighting to defend their conditions from the ferocious assault of the employers.

The Huddington Road Agreement and attacks on workers in the private sector are carried through by dividing one section of workers from another.

The priority for strengthening the traditions of militant trade unionism is to break down these divisions.

Building up fighting unions is



an easy matter.

Nor will it happen in a day. Militants in different unions and workplaces will have different strategies towards doing this.

But there are some pointers that we should bear in mind as we try to organise in workplaces.

### Build from the bottom up

If you are in a big workplace, it is vital to have an active local committee consisting of shop stewards and local reps.

These have to be people who see their first responsibility as representing their members and getting them organised to stand together and fight.

The committee needs to meet very regularly, send emails out to members if they can, maybe use a web page to get their news across, hold general meetings – all the things that put the committee in a position to offer a genuine lead to members.

During the Dublin bus strike, it was experienced local shop stewards that formed the backbone of well-run pickets.

Building up your own organisation is the only way to ensure that union members are not to be used as marching fodder for ICTU.

### Get people to join

If you are in a small workplace, once you are a member, you should try to get others to join.

Unions are the only way to collectively defend working conditions.

Despite all the anti-union propaganda, people still see unions as the best line of defence.

### Build political trade unionism

In the lock-out, the socialist politics of Larkin and Connolly breathed life into the sympathy strike and class solidarity.

In the 1930's recession, the

militancy of Irish trade unions in Northern Ireland was able to reach across the sectarian divide and owed much to the Communist Party.

Today, in the Chicago Teachers Union, rank and file organisation and some socialists have been the initiators of their community-based campaign.

Socialists are very often the backbone of militancy in the unions because they challenge divisions and see their fight as part of an overall working class struggle.

In practice, this means seeing building on the streets as the complement to building in the workplace.

The rank and file group, SIPTU Grassroots, for example have prioritised getting delegations from the workplaces to the People's Assembly protest against austerity on the day of the opening of the Dáil (Wednesday 18

September).

It also means showing which politics supports workers and which doesn't – which is why the campaign under way in many unions to get individual members to stop contributions to the Labour Party has been so successful.

### Get stuck in at every level of the union

Conferences, especially in SIPTU, are often routine and alienating for new members.

But militants can set the tone, like they did in the Red Card protest at this year's teachers' conferences.

Resolutions which commit the union to action can get passed and may make local mobilisations easier.

Activists in the union always need to put themselves up for elections to local and regional

committees and branches so that they can connect up with other militants.

Sometimes there is an opportunity for a socialist to take on the leadership, like in the strong vote for Gerry Hicks in Unite recently in the UK.

If we are serious about challenging the union bureaucracy we have to use every platform open to us.

Never has the presence of strong rank and file groupings within the unions been more important.

The union leadership has rammed austerity and attacks on working conditions down our throats.

But as their strategy fails to deliver in terms of jobs and basic protection for workers, the union leaders will become more vulnerable.

Between now that then, we need to set in train the organisational and political challenge to push them aside.

## Yeates' 'Lockout Dublin 1913' – All the facts – none of the lessons

Review by John Lyons

THIS year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1913 Lockout, one of the most important periods in Irish history, when some four hundred employers in Dublin locked out over 20,000 workers in an attempt to crush the ever-increasing industrial militancy of the working class of the time.

That militancy came to be known as Larkinism, the core principle of which was working class solidarity exemplified by the maxim 'an injury to one is the concern of all'.

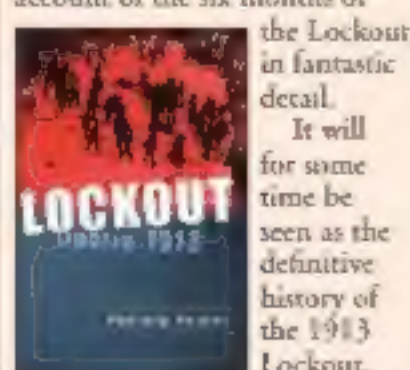
The Lockout is the major event in Irish labour history so it may surprise many to find that the first full study of this crucial period appeared only in 2000 with the publication of Pádraig

Yeates' *Lockout Dublin 1913*.

It has been republished this year to coincide with the centenary of the events it describes.

*Lockout* is a monumental piece of historical research, close to six hundred pages long with comprehensive notes and bibliography displaying the breath of archives and other sources consulted.

It provides a near day-by-day account of the six months of



One really gets a sense of the Dublin of the time, as Yeates delves into the social and political life of the city, a city in which a downtrodden working class was slowly getting up off its knees.

### Yeates' delusion

The years leading up to 1913 had witnessed working class militancy in action as the ITGWU, had gone about the business of organising the workers of Dublin – striking out for better pay, a shorter day, and a better life marked with dignity rather than destitution.

The radical trade unionism of the ITGWU provided a taste of the power of the working class and demonstrated that trade unions could be used as weapons in class warfare rather than as instruments of class

collaboration.

Yeates, however, draws some different lessons.

He claims that Larkin was 'deluding himself in thinking that the sympathetic strike could turn Dublin into the birthplace of a syndicalist revolution', suggests that the Lockout was 'unnecessary' and dismissively rejects the idea pursued by Larkin as he campaigned throughout Britain, that the key to the Dublin workers gaining victory was for the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) to isolate the Dublin employers by refusing to handle their goods.

Solidarity and militant trade union action could have crushed the bosses in Dublin, but the British trade union bureaucrats ignored the appeals coming not only from Larkin but from

the massed ranks of their own members.

### Supporting Partnership

The key lessons for workers have all been whitewashed. But for Yeates this was an active



Peter Cassells of ICTU

part of the narrative from the very outset.

Like all histories, *Lockout Dublin 1913* cannot but reflect the contemporary concerns of the time in which it was written.

The Celtic Tiger was roaring and Yeates, Industrial Correspondent for the *Irish Times* at the time, set out to bolster the institutions of social

partnership.

Both John Dunne of the employers union (IBEC) and Peter Cassells of ICTU had helped support the book financially.

The government, the bosses and the unions' leaders were actively collaborating and such things as militant trade unionism and working class solidarity were not only characterised as out of date, but as radically subversive to general prosperity.

Behind all the facts Yeates real agenda is to convince his reader that we are somehow 'all in this together'.

Five years into a vicious, class-inspired onslaught against the working class, this seems little more than a sick joke.

*Lockout Dublin 1913* by Pádraig Yeates (Gill & MacMillan, 2013), €21.99.



# Reclaim Our Unions Today

SIPTU Grassroots is a bottom-up initiative dedicated to transforming SIPTU into a fighting union that its members can be proud of. Alan Lawes is the group's PRO and Socialist Worker took the opportunity to interview him on his reflections on the lessons of 1913 for today's union militants.

**SW:** Perhaps we should start with how you first became involved with trade unions?

**AL:** I was always fascinated with trade unions since I was a kid, living in Dublin's North inner city.

What were for me the two most important events in our country's history - the 1913 lock out and the 1916 Rising - both involved trade unions.

Me and my Da would pass by Liberty Hall on a regular basis, and every time, my Da told me "that we owned a brick in this building".

I didn't really know what he meant until I was much older, and realised he meant simply the members owned the union.

So when I started work in Cappagh Hospital in 1983 I immediately decided to join. It wasn't long before I became a deputy shop steward and soon after the chief shop steward.

That led me to have a 20 year relationship with first, the ICGWU, and then SIPTU. During that time I served as Trustee, Health Services Branch member and on many occasions delegate to biennial conference.

**SW:** At your speech at the recent SIPTU Grassroots protest, you mentioned how the unions have changed since the 1980's. Could you explain what you mean by that?

**AL:** In the early days, I took great pride in my job as shop steward and was very impressed with how SIPTU fought hard to improve their members pay and working conditions.

In 1987, in the middle of another economic crisis, SIPTU signed the first of the partnership agreements.

To me at the time, it saved my job, as I had just been given my notice. Being on a bridging loan trying to buy a house, it was a nervous time, but the agreement was signed and it also gave me a very small increase in pay.

The partnership process had arrived. What seemed like a sensible and measured response by the unions to an economic crisis was, in fact, a disastrous sea-change in the industrial relations landscape.

**SW:** What changes did partnership bring?

**AL:** We were no longer in an adversarial relationship of Us vs. Them.



Alan Lawes and Marnie Halburaw alongside other members of SIPTU Grassroots at a recent protest against cuts to Special Needs Assistants

We were now partners working together 'for a better future for us all'. It soon became obvious that this was like trying to fit a square block into a round hole.

On the shop floor as a local shop steward, I soon began to feel by-passed.

Partnership seemed to bring HR and the union officials closer and, at the same time, drive a wedge between the members and their local officials. In reality, what that meant was that any local deal seemed to be sorted between the official and HR manager before the shop steward arrived in the room to negotiate!

On a macro level, trade union leaders were too close to Government, and it became obvious that they seemed more concerned with the Government's problems than with their own members'. I became disillusioned and decided to walk away, and stood down as shop steward in about 2003.

**SW:** Has the crisis changed any of your views?

**AL:** Since the economic crash in 2008, I became an interested

observer.

Naturally, given my own experiences I thought the crisis would bring the unions into their own - as had happened back in 1987.

What followed instead, was the biggest sell-out of members' pay and conditions I have witnessed in my life-time.

When Fianna Fail cut pay SIPTU huffed and puffed and Jack O'Connor made some loud noises.

But once Labour and Fine Gael came to power in 2011, we witnessed total capitulation from SIPTU and O'Connor.

Croke Park 1 was recommended by SIPTU, even though it meant 30,000 voluntary redundancies and pay cuts.

Then Croke Park 2 was recommended. When the members rejected this, SIPTU and O'Connor first ignored their members, then sat

on their hands, and finally colluded with the Government.

Labour and FG introduced the FEMPI legislation (the emergency law that allowed the state to directly cut pay and change conditions for public sector workers) which was like putting a loaded gun to the back of our members' heads.

That's why they voted for a re-jigged Croke Park 2, now called the Haddington Road Agreement. Once again, O'Connor recommended pay cuts, and never once demanded that the better-off pay for the crash.

This was a total reversal of his 2009 position.

Partnership now means cosying up to his Labour Party pals and abandoning his own members.

After Croke Park 1, and angered by our Trade Union's inaction, I got back involved as a member of our work committee and night time shop steward.

The committee - like me - were disgusted with SIPTU's continued support for government policy.

I asked the committee to allow me to concentrate on bringing the fight to regain our union into

SIPTU itself.

Soon after, I joined SIPTU Grassroots with the aim of reclaiming our union back into the hands of our members.

Like my Da suggested many years ago, the "members own the union".

**SW:** You have called for Jack O'Connor to resign. Why?

I have called for O'Connor to resign on a number of occasions. Firstly, his inflated salary cuts him off from the members.

At a time of severe austerity, he should lead by example and take a major cut in his €115,000 salary, plus expenses. Secondly, the membership has no way of calling him to account.

Our leader should have to stand in front of the membership every few years in order to get their democratic approval. But the most important issue for me was his total lack of leadership and fight, when we needed him most.

We the members are realistic; we understand the situation the country finds itself in.

But we also understand that we didn't cause it, so we would expect our trade union, to protect our interests rather than tell us to give away the pay and conditions we secured over many years of hard struggle.

And lastly, it is so obvious to everyone where Jack O'Connor's loyalties lie, now that the Labour Party is in Government.

**SW:** Finally do you think there is a role for socialist politics in the trade union movement? Or do you think union activists should leave their politics out of the union?

As far as Socialist politics and the trade union movement are concerned, there will always be a connection.

Struggle is part of the DNA of both. But the lesson learned over the last few years is to never have total dependence on any one party.

If you want to do the best for your members, then you do just that, and hold out for the best offer no matter what political party it comes from.

But of course, one would expect a socialist party to have a more natural allegiance to workers' rights and their struggle for a fair wage and better conditions in general.

(Details of SIPTU Grassroots at <https://www.facebook.com/ReclaimOurUnion>)

## The Struggle in the suburbs (The 1913 Lock Out outside the Dublin city)

By Leah Speight

ALTHOUGH 1913 is generally known as a city event, the first lockout actually occurred in Lucan, in the Anna Liffey Mills, a flour mill known locally as the Shackleton mills.

George Shackleton, the first employer to lockout workers, explained in his diaries how he had spoken to each employee individually - warning them his firm would not recognize Larkin's Transport Union.

Shackleton's militancy was even

recognised by William Martin Murphy who wrote to him saying "a few more men like you and we'd wipe this 'blackguard' (Larkin) off the face of Dublin."

### Workers strike

Employees were told to resign from the union or get a weeks notice.

In the event the workers didn't wait for this notice, and by 17 August they were out on strike. Shackletons, however, soon announced that they were to resume business with new staff.

This produced nightly processions in Lucan village, with the Royal Irish Constabulary having to stand guard at the mill. One of the nightly protests culminated in a fierce riot, in which several people were seriously injured during a baton charge, and groups of women and children were trampled.

### Tainted goods

Despite his mill resuming with scab labour, Shackleton's



Shackleton's mill

business soon suffered with the strike action across the city.

Dubliners took Larkinism seriously and on the morning of 30 August workers in Jacob's refused to handle flour from Shackleton's mill.

Flour produced in the mill was 'tainted' and it was not only Jacob's workers that were out on strike.

Across Dublin workers involved in transporting flour also refused to handle 'tainted'

goods.

Unfortunately, however, Shackleton & Sons was not only an employer, but also the landlord for many employees. The threat of losing both a house and a job was too much for some and it eventually caused a split in the village.

Like the rest of Dublin, workers in Lucan were unable to win. Yet their story is every bit as inspiring as their fellow workers across the city.



# Solidarity from the TUC could have won the fight

By John Newsinger

From 1910 right up until the outbreak of War in August 1914, the British working class was in revolt, a revolt against employers, government and its own leaders. Great strikes had swept over the country, unofficial strikes that saw mass picketing, sympathetic action and a willingness to confront both police and the army. There was a syndicalist spirit at large.

When the first reports of the murderous police attacks in Dublin over the weekend of 30-31 August appeared in the British press, they caused outrage among British workers.

At this time, the Liberal government in power at Westminster was regarded as a government of millionaires, regularly breaking strikes for the bosses and bankers.

The attack on the Dublin working class was seen as part of the same class struggle that British workers were fighting and, if successful the city-wide Lockout would only encourage such all-out attacks in Britain. The British labour movement rallied to the support of the ITGWU.

## Rank and file solidarity

The British Trade Union Congress organised a magnificent relief effort for the Dublin workers. Over the course of the Lockout, British trade unions, socialists, suffragettes, rank and file workers, and sympathisers contributed around £150,000 to provide food and assistance.

The quantities of relief shipped to Dublin from British workers were enormous: 1,797,699 loaves of bread, 689,166 10lb bags of potatoes, 480,306 packets of tea, 884 tons of coal and so on.

There is no doubt that this made a vital contribution to the struggle.

The TUC's motives for this relief effort were very much mixed, however. Certainly, British union leaders saw the Lockout as a threat to the British labour movement and did not want the employers to win.

More important in their calculations though were other factors.

They hoped that the relief effort would allow them to take the settlement of the dispute out of the hands of the ITGWU so that a 'compromise' could be reached, a compromise that would not include reinstatement of activists and militants.

As Jim Larkin pointed out, the ITGWU could have negotiated such a sell-out without their help if it had been so inclined. But most important, the relief effort was intended to head off demands for solidarity action in Britain, demands on the docks and railways for the blacking of Dublin traffic.

If the official movement had done nothing to help the Dublin workers, the call for unofficial action would have been irresistible.

Leading the way in the fight for action in support of the Dublin workers was the Daily Herald newspaper, whose deputy editor was the Irish socialist W P Ryan and whose Dublin correspondent was Francis Sheehy-Skeffington.

The Herald wholeheartedly supported working class struggle, urging workers to take on the bosses and their own leaders if they got in the way.

Supporting the Dublin workers, but tied to the official movement was the largest Marxist organisation in Britain, the British Socialist Party (BSP), which claimed some 40,000 members at this time, and had some influence in the trade union movement.

Incredibly, the BSP was opposed to industrial militancy, urging workers to devote their efforts to the election of socialists to Parliament where the 'real struggle' was.

They supported the Dublin workers, but threw their weight against unofficial action.

Many British workers saw action in support of Dublin as a way of furthering their own struggles, as a pretext for taking on employers with whom they had unfinished business.

On the railways, workers began blacking Dublin traffic on 16 September with the dispute spreading from Liverpool down the tracks as far as Birmingham, Sheffield, Crewe and Derby as workers either walked or were locked out.

The Daily Herald called for a national strike to settle the issue, but the union leadership succeeded in getting the men back to work.

## Resistance grows

The solidarity movement continued to grow in strength, however. Mass meetings in support of the Dublin workers were held throughout the country, collections were held and militant resolutions passed.

Peter Larkin spoke in Rotherham one Sunday morning in mid October and the collection realised over £4, a record for Rotherham.

A lunchtime tour of the pubs collected another £1. In the afternoon he spoke in Sheffield where he shared a platform with Keir Hardie and 20,000 people blocked the streets, preventing the trams getting through. There was tremendous enthusiasm for the cause.

When Jim Larkin was imprisoned on 28 August, support in Britain reached new levels.

The Liberal government was actually forced to order his release after only 17 days in prison.

This was a great, indeed, an unprecedented victory.

By now, however, it was clear that solidarity action was needed to win the dispute and defeat the Dublin employers. On his release from prison, Larkin launched his 'fiery cross' tour of Britain, calling for the blacking of Dublin traffic, once again with the enthusiastic support of the Daily Herald.

He spoke to massive audiences, often with thousands of people having to be turned away.

One of those who often shared the platform with him was the left trade union leader, Ben Tillett, a leading member of the BSP, who joined him in attacking the trade union and Labour Party leaderships for their refusal to fight.

Once again, workers on the docks and on the railways were ready to black Dublin traffic.

On the docks, union officials acknowledged the difficulty they had keeping their members at work with Harry Orbell reporting that he 'had never known a time when there has been manifested a desire to help any union in dispute as there is among dockers both in London and the provincial ports towards their Dublin comrades'.

The officials had received 'strong words' from their members for their opposition to action, but 'so far we have been able to hold the men in check'.

On the railways some 30,000 men walked out on unofficial strike, but officials got a return to work without the reinstatement of the drivers who had started the action.

## Special Conference

The pressure was such that for the first time in its history the British TUC called a special conference on 9 December to discuss the Dublin situation.

Larkin hoped that the conference would adopt a policy of the official blacking of Dublin traffic and was confident that such action would bring the employers to terms. Many employers had had enough.

The workers' resistance had been much more determined and protracted than they had believed possible.

The mere declaration of such a policy of official blacking would have precipitated the breakup of the Employers' Federation.

This was not to be. In a manifesto published in the Herald on 22 November, Larkin urged his readers to 'tell your leaders... that this bloody warfare in Dublin must come to an end, this sacrificing of men, women and children must cease, and if they are not prepared to bring it to an end, then you of the rank and file will see to it that "finis" shall be written'.

The 9 December conference had been called not to support the Dublin workers, but to put down the revolt among the British rank and file that Larkin and the Dublin workers had inspired.

For the leaders of the British trade unions, a victory in Dublin now looked more dangerous than a defeat. It would inspire a renewed wave of militancy that they were determined to prevent.

At the conference, the first item of business was a motion of censure on Larkin for his attacks on British union leaders, a motion that was proposed by Ben Tillett.

After a bitter debate, the censure was carried overwhelmingly.

The proposal for the official blacking of Dublin was moved by another leading BSP member, Jack Jones, a full-time Gasworkers official, who spent most of his speech attacking unofficial action, condemning 'the rank and file' who advocated it.

To no one's surprise, the resolution for official action was overwhelmingly defeated.

The TUC conference signalled both the defeat of the Dublin workers and the successful containment of the rank and file revolt among British workers.



Jim Larkin addresses a thronged rally during his tour of Britain

# Women and the lock out

interview by Hannah Klang

The lockout has been remembered as a predominantly male struggle. Women generally featured as wives and mothers, but as Mary Muldowney explains, women were often on the front lines of resistance.

**Q - Mary, if we hear anything about women it tends to be the big names like Constance Markievicz, but what was the role of ordinary Dublin women in 1913?**

**MM -** In general they played every bit as active a role as their male counterparts.

From 1911 the most militant women had established their own union in the form of the Irish Women's Workers Union (IWWU).

This then worked as an example in 1913, as female employers took on their bosses, often with extreme heroism.

When scabs attempted to get into Jacobs' many women were arrested for violently barring them.

This pattern was also replicated in terms of women on picket lines and in the streets of Dublin.

Although Larkin and Connolly are rightly remembered, activists such as Delia Larkin and Rosie Hackett were also at the forefront of organising resistance.

**Q - That all sounds amazing, but were there any particular difficulties in organizing women at the time?**



Militants of the Irish Women Workers Union

**MM -** Absolutely. Unlike many of their male counterparts, women tended to work in isolation from one another, principally in the likes of small scale agriculture or domestic service.

This made organizing them significantly more challenging.

It is telling that the Jacobs factory was one workplace where women were concentrated in one space.

About 350 women worked in the factory, allowing them to gain strength from each other in the face of the bosses and the scabs they had hired.

**Q - What was the relationship between the women of the lockout and the suffragette movement?**

**MM -** In general the striking women tended to be more self-consciously working class, whilst many in the suffragette movement came from more privileged backgrounds.

Having said this there were many women involved in both of the movements and a small number of suffragettes who became radicalised through their experiences of the lock out. Louise Bennett is a good example.

Having volunteered in the soup kitchen in Liberty Hall, Bennett, who had been independently wealthy, became a life long fighter for the workers movement.

**Q - What do you think is the most important lesson we can take from the lockout?**

**MM -** This is easy. Fighting back is incredibly important. After all you can't win if you don't fight.

Today we are faced with a government that has no respect for the citizens, with anyone who fights back being portrayed as selfish in causing inconvenience to the public.

So solidarity with each other's struggle is something that is very important to have.



# Workers of the world unite!

## International workers struggles 1905-1914

By Madeleine Johansson

**T**o fully understand the 1913 Lockout it has to be looked at in the context of a worldwide wave of working class resistance. Like today the world of the early 20th century was awash with struggle. From the late 1800's onwards there was a significant increase in workers organisation as union membership expanded rapidly.

The capitalist system was expanding and growing but also experiencing regular economic crises. Employers used every means available to them, including strike breakers, the police and the army, to stop workers organising and winning improvements in working conditions.

### Russia and Sweden

In the early 1900's there were several major class struggles, the most significant one being the Russian Revolution in 1905.

Russia was one of the most backward countries in Europe at the time, with the majority of the population living as peasants off the land.

However, it also had some of the largest factories in Europe.

The revolution began as protests calling for the Tsar to provide bread for the people but soon became a bitter struggle between workers and the ruling class. The Russian workers began to challenge the capitalist system through the organisation of workers councils (Soviets) to run society. While the 1905 revolution lost, it provided important lessons for the Bolshevik victory in 1917.

In 1909 a general strike took place in Sweden which was the largest ever at the time in proportion to the size of the population. Almost 300,000 workers went on strike for several months and some stayed out for up to a year. The strike was called in response to several issues, including pay cuts, non-recognition of unions, and lockouts by employers. In the end there was not enough strike pay to keep the workers out and, like in Dublin, workers had to return to work or face starvation.

### America and Britain

The period from 1910 to 1914 also saw a spike in struggle in both Britain and the USA.

In Philadelphia dock workers went on strike in May in 1913, following a wave of strikes throughout 1912-13 in Massachusetts and New Jersey.

The workers had joined the syndicalist union Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), also known as the Wobblies. The union was mixed race and set out to unite black and white workers against the employers.



Workers mobilise on the streets of Moscow in 1905

The Philadelphia strike is important because it showed how solidarity can force the bosses to back down, as the workers won their demands for pay rises and a ten-hour day.

It also established the union as a serious force against the employers and the state. In Britain the 'Great Unrest' from 1910-14 involved thousands of workers in strikes, direct action and clashes with state forces. It was led by the rank and file often against

the wishes of their leaders.

### Lessons for today

When Larkin and Connolly set out to organise the Dublin workers, the examples of these struggles would prove invaluable. Many lessons would undoubtedly be learned. However the one in struggle was not to prove long-lasting.

An inability to generalize resistance across sectors and international borders severely hampered inter-

national solidarity.

Added to this was the inability of syndicalism generally to take on the issue of the capitalist state.

When the War came, the ability of workers to fight for their interests was swept away in a sea of reaction.

Neither the union bureaucrats nor the reformists had any interest in really fighting. That said, the struggles of the rank and file would not be forgotten, particularly in the upsurge that led to the Bolshevik Revolution.

## From 1913 to 2013: 'Precarious' workers can fight back

By James O'Toole

**T**here are constantly myths about the working class. Every few years we hear that the class is 'disappearing', primarily because the types of work we do are always changing.

Another myth is that workers are now in more precarious jobs with little security. This is then supplemented with the claim that precarious employment undermines our ability to fight.

In this article I will argue that work has not become as 'precarious' as many commentators currently argue. But even if it has, the lessons of 1913 prove that sometimes the most vulnerable workers actually fight the hardest.

In 1913 most Irish people still farmed the land.

Those workers that did earn a wage often did so as drivers or dockers. By today's standards many of these workers faced horrible conditions. Yet by and large the most precarious workers found a space in the ITGWU and began to fight.

### Employment today

The key piece of evidence offered for the rise of the precariat is de-industrialisation. Instead of major blue collar professions, there are a whole host of tasks, many of which are on zero hour contracts.

Casualisation and labour market flexibility have left many workers in vulnerable positions and the alleged corollary is that the working class has lost its power.



McDonald workers fighting for their rights

This is largely the stuff of sociologists' fantasies. Indeed, as Chris Harman has rightly pointed out, the level of de-industrialisation is often exaggerated by those who want to write the working

class off as a force for change.

Take, for instance, the number of industrial workers in the world's biggest single economy, that of the US. In 1998 the number of workers in industry

was nearly 20 percent higher than in 1971, roughly 50 percent higher than in 1950 and nearly three times the level of 1900.

In addition, a lot of industrial

jobs have also been re-categorised as services, but in the end the label is irrelevant.

Whether you are working in a barber shop or down in the pits, the levels of resistance will ultimately depend on organisation and solidarity.

### Unionisation

Against the received wisdom, there has been a huge wave of unionisation amongst workers in UK call centres on terrible contracts over the last few years.

In the USA and New Zealand workers in fast food outlets like McDonalds have been organising militant pickets against the anti-worker multinational and winning the right to organise workplace by workplace. The key is militancy and the willingness to stick together.

Here in Ireland retail workers have given a lead by occupying their workplaces when their companies tried to fire them without paying proper redundancy. Workers in Thomas Cook, Game, HMV and La Senza all won money by employing militant tactics. The Thomas Cook workers even forced a multinational to pay them 8 weeks redundancy per year by refusing to leave the building.

All of this proves that the working class is still a force to be reckoned with. Even if the type of work constantly changes, the lesson doesn't. If we're strong we win better contracts from the bosses, when we're weak our contracts get more 'precarious'. The solution is therefore very simple - get organised and fight back.



# Socialist Worker

## Support the Dublin Bus workers



DUBLIN Bus workers have voted overwhelmingly to reject a deal with their company that would mean lower earnings.

Since 2008, Dublin Bus has cut 300 buses and axed over 400 workers. Pay has been also been frozen and there have been drastic changes to workers terms and conditions. The cumulative effect of this has been over €26 million in pay and salary related savings for the company. Despite this management want more.

They insist that the company must find another €11 million in savings and demand that workers bear the cost of this 'adjustment'. In practice this will mean

- A reduction in overtime rates from 1.5 times normal pay to 1.25 (this will cost drivers €35 on a rest day and €90 on a bank holiday)

- The loss of 2 days holiday's for clerical workers and maintenance staff.

- The reduction of uncertified sick days from seven to four

- No sick pay for the first three days.

### Worker flexibility

On top of this management wants workers to sign up to new travel time and scheduling arrangements.

Currently drivers are paid from the moment they arrive at the depot, meaning that they are remunerated whilst travelling to their allotted buses. Under the new scheme this arrangement will be gone as drivers are forced to make their own way to and from the buses they drive.

On top of this, management wants to increase the flexibility that drivers give to the extent that it will be extremely difficult to plan for the future. Work-life balance is often bandied about by the government, but under these new arrangements drivers will be expected to clock in and out on the whims of the management. In addition, management expects workers to sign up to the new arrangements without the full information of the extent of these changes.

### Varadkar's Privatisation

Behind all of these moves the real agenda is privatisation. Minister for Transport, Leo Varadkar is determined to introduce competition into the bus network through the auspices of the National Transport Authority.

From 2015 there will be a competitive process run by the NTA in which 10% of the bus routes will be up for tender.

This means that private operators with staff on reduced pay and conditions can compete for routes currently offered by



Dublin Bus. This will then be used as a stick to beat workers in Dublin Bus for the crimes of having a pension and a salary which keeps food on the table.

To date successive Irish governments have cut the subvention for the buses to support privatisation. But across Europe bus services are understood to be a 'public good' that improves the lives of those citizens that rely on them. This is why in cities from Lyon to Brussels over 65% of the funding for the services comes from taxation.

In contrast Dublin Bus is forced to operate on a subvention of a little more than 25%. Instead of rewarding the workers for decades of service, Varadkar wants to drive them into poverty. As a government minister Varadkar earns over €170,000 but expects workers on a fraction of this to give even more.

*Socialist Worker* stands with the workers and vows to support them in any way it possibly can.

## Three Days that Prove the Bus Workers Can Win

Varadkar may have talked tough, but after only one working day the reality of hundreds of thousands of people not getting to work proved too much.

Bus workers provide an invaluable service to 400,000 people every working day. If they stick together this gives them tremendous power.

## Milne Food Workers Seek Union Recognition

WORKERS in Milne Foods in Offaly are fighting a modern William Martin Murphy.

- They joined a union about a year ago and put in three claims to their employer:

- They wanted an increase in their basic pay because most of them are on the minimum wage.

- They wanted the

restoration of overtime rates of time and a half.

- They wanted an allowance for working shifts.

Instead of even meeting the union, the company refused to even recognise them.

SIPTU responded by referring the issue to the Labour Relations Commission and eventually to the Labour Court.

That court made a recommendation that the company should meet the union to discuss its claims and come to a collective agreement. But so far the company has refused to budge.

The union movement in Offaly and beyond should get behind these workers and show their full solidarity.